



Practices for fostering lifelong cultural connections for Aboriginal children in care

**A/Prof Lynette Riley, Sarah Ciftci, A/Prof
Amy Conley Wright – The University of
Sydney**

**Trudy Everingham & Jayde Ward – NSW
Department of Communities and Justice**

**Stephen Newman – Permanency Support
Program, Uniting Care**



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We acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.

Tree of Knowledge - pokerwork on kangaroo skin, Lynette Riley, 2010

<http://Sydney.edu.au/kinship-module>



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Overview

- **Acknowledgment of Country**
- **Welcome to session**
- **Overview of the Fostering Lifelong Connections project**
- **Developing video resources for the sector**
- **Video premier:**
 - The Bridge
 - Building Bridges
- **Reflections on fostering family and cultural connections**

ARC Linkage - Fostering Lifelong Connections for Children in Permanent Care



Partner organisations

NSW DCJ, Barnardos Australia, CareSouth, Catholic Care Hunter Manning, Catholic Care Wollongong, Key Assets, Uniting, Wesley Dalmar

Research team

Chief investigators: Associate Professor Amy Conley Wright, Professor Judith Cashmore AO, Associate Professor Lynette Riley, Dr Susan Collings

Research Centre for Children & Families: Sarah Ciftci, Dr Betty Luu, Suzanne Pope

Partner investigators: Professor Elsbeth Neil (University of East Anglia) & Professor Peter Pecora (University of Washington & Casey Family Programs), Matthew Jones (NSW DCJ) and Dr Robert Urqhart (Barnardos Australia)

Expert Reference Group: Experts-by-Experience and Experts-by-Profession

Project aim

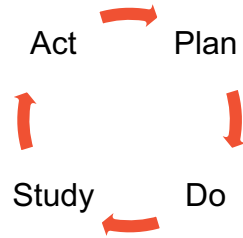


Painting by Coomaditchie artists created with the FLC action researchers

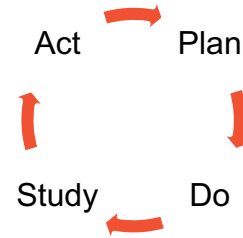
Develop, test, embed, and disseminate relationship-building practices to encourage sustainable, positive relationships between children's carers and families for children in long-term care (foster care, Kinship care, guardianship or open adoption)

Action research methodology and scaling up practices

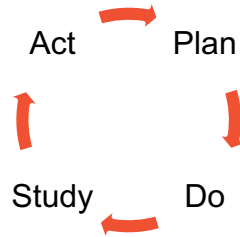
Learning session 1-
Initiation
Feb 2020



Learning session 2-
Refinement
Oct 2020



Learning session 3-
Sustainability
June 2021



Learning session 4-
Dissemination
February 2022

Scaling up in Partner
Organisations and resource
development for the sector
Dec 2022

Project principles

1. Trauma awareness
2. Cultural safety and respect
3. Reflective practice



Practice trials

Practice descriptions	Trial
Debriefing - Meet or talk to child, parent and/or carer before and/or after visit about what worked well and what to improve.	Cycle 1, Wollongong & Sydney
Facilitate Family Time at a distance - Assist children and families to use technology-based communication (e.g., video or calls/group chats) or no-tech exchanges of letters, artwork, photos	Cycle 1, Maitland & Dubbo
Carer coaching - Maintain regular contact with carers before/after visits to offer feedback on their efforts and encourage reflection to improve future interactions with the child's parents or other relatives.	Cycle 2, Wollongong
Co-regulation - Assist birth relatives and carers to reflect on and understand their own emotions so they can respond sensitively to children's reactions and manage behaviour that arises before/after visits.	Cycle 2, Sydney & Maitland
Cultural connections – Document practices that support children connecting to their culture through their relationships and time spent with family.	Cycle 2, Dubbo
Hearing children's voices - Work with carers to collect children's immediate feedback after visits and discuss with carers and birth relatives	Cycle 3, Sydney & Wollongong
Supporting sibling connections- Ask children about their siblings and whom they would like to see, implement creative ways to keep children connected	Cycle 3, Dubbo & Maitland

Connections to Family and Culture – Dubbo team

- The videos were developed from a participatory action research collaboration with six Aboriginal caseworkers from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and Uniting in Dubbo.
- We documented their experiences with supporting Aboriginal children's connections to family and culture over 6 months.
- We met monthly to reflect on their practice and discuss how we could translate their good practice into resources for the OOHC sector.



**DESERT
PEA
MEDIA**

OUR VISION

An Australia where Original Nations people are respected, embraced and supported to live a life of their own design.

OUR MISSION

Working with Original Nations Australians to build a best practice model, creating social change through collaborative storytelling.

OUR PROCESS

We facilitate, document and distribute creative and collaborative conversations that explore 'the real, the ideal and the bridge'.

Behind the Scenes - Desert Pea Workshop



DCJ caseworkers with mural that inspires them



Talbragar Wiradjuri Dancers



Talbragar Wiradjuri Dancers on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Talbragar-Wiradjuri-Aboriginal-Corporation-ICN-8444-1706439449622347/>

On Location with Uncle Ralph Naden



Uncle Ralph Naden, Yalmambirra Boogijoon Doolin Cultural School, Balladoran
Phone number: 02 6881177

Screening of Films

The Bridge: <https://youtu.be/lrWOzXuB98c>

Building Bridges: <https://youtu.be/KkZXFL2GoXQ>

Key themes

- **Lost:** “I felt like there was something missing in me. Like I didn’t know who I was”.
- **Bridge:** “[we are] a bridge between our carers and families”
- **Belonging:** “*it makes me feel connected ... That knowledge, that love gave me strength*”



Reflections on fostering family and cultural connections

- 1) What has it been like to be part of the Fostering Lifelong Connections project?**
- 2) What were the main messages you hoped to get across in the videos?**
- 3) If caseworkers could do one thing tomorrow to help foster a cultural connection, what would you suggest?**

Advice for non-Aboriginal caseworkers

- **Be respectfully curious. Ask questions.**
- **Listen to the voice of the child. Ask the child who they want to see, who they are missing and yearning to connect with.**
- **Get out into the community and talk with families. They know what is important to them.**

Viewing Guide for films

A viewing guide for caseworkers and social workers can be downloaded [here](#)

Topics include:

- **Strength in Culture**
- **Listening to the child's voice**
- **The power of conversations**
- **Practicing cultural safety and respect**

Each topic has a set of accompanying reflective questions and activities.

Contacts and links

Research Centre Email: rccf.research@sydney.edu.au

Research Centre Website: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/arts/our-research/centres-institutes-and-groups/research-centre-for-children-and-families.html>

Fostering Lifelong Connections Website: <https://rccf-fostering-connections.sydney.edu.au/>

Viewing guide for films:

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/content/dam/corporate/documents/faculty-of-arts-and-social-sciences/research/research-centres-institutes-groups/rccf-flc-viewing-guide-18oct2021-accessible.pdf>

Talbragar Wiradjuri Dancers Email: lewis@lewisburns.com

Talbragar Wiradjuri Dancers Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Talbragar-Wiradjuri-Aboriginal-Corporation-ICN-8444-1706439449622347/>

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<https://nit.com.au/im-74-this-year-and-im-still-dancing/>